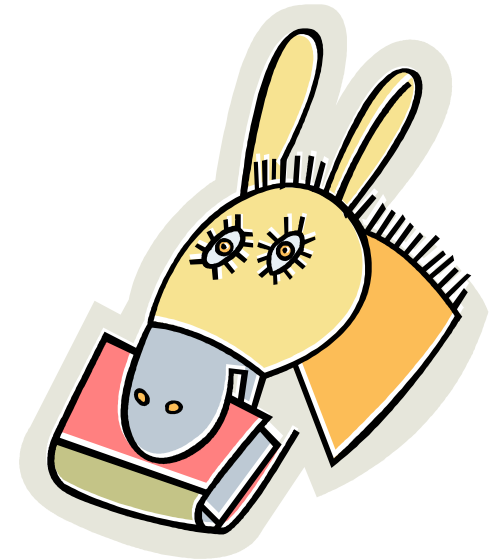


Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy

An Outcome Study

Masters Thesis
Randy H Zasloff
May 2009



What is EFP?

- EFP is experiential psychotherapy that includes equines. It may include but is not limited to, a number of mutually respectful equine activities, such as: handling, grooming, longeing, riding, driving, and vaulting. A licensed mental health professional working with an appropriately credentialed equine professional facilitates EFP. EFP may be facilitated by a mental health professional who is dually credentialed as an equine professional. (EFMHA Fact Sheet)

EFP: An Example

[horse dancing](#)

We started out slowly, moving back and forth with each other, and I sent him out, trotting, then cantering around me. As he bucked in playful joy, my whole soul came alive. He joined back up with me, and we flowed through the length of the arena, our strides matching in harmony. I ran beside him, and my heart sang with a feeling of connection and belonging. Tears of acceptance and freedom welled up from my inner being, as I watched Gallant embody the joy that I felt inside. I was so amazed at this deep connection that opened up to me when I allowed myself to be free, and I was astonished to discover that the result of being authentic was deep connection, not rejection.

EFP Research

Quantitative

- Reduction in aggression & depression, improved self-esteem & overall functioning, & reduction in anxiety

Qualitative

- Role of the Horse: as mirror, metaphor, in relationship, connector to the natural world

Unique Qualities Horses Bring to Therapy

- Mirror & provide self-object experiences
- Build attachment with a safe partner
- Relationship in the here and now
- Ability to find & show incongruity
- Provide a connection to the natural world
- Act a metaphor for client issues
- Nonverbal experience



EFP Uniquely Suited for Trauma

- From an Interpersonal Neurobiology perspective:

“...integrating modalities from the left and right hemispheres enable traumatic memories to be processed in a new manner that allows resolution to occur.”

Siegel (2003)

Method

- Modeled on pilot study (2006) - women with 'complex' PTSD
- Brief treatment - 10 weeks
- EFP in conjunction with psycho-education & cognitive behavioral therapy
- Measures: BDI, BAI, DES, OQ-45
- Pre-, mid-, post, and follow up measurement points
- Qualitative questions; post & follow up

Group Outline



The Co-therapists



Magic



Gypsy



Tankha

The Co-therapists



Amir



Gallant

Frieda



Gem

Participants

- 10 adult women with complex PTSD/& or Borderline Disorder & other (depression, substance abuse, anorexia...)
- Referred by local county mental health clinic or if they expressed an interest in EFP
- Currently in therapy for 2 years or more with no reduction or resolution of symptoms
- No severe allergies to horses/asthma
- Walk on uneven ground & lift, push, or pull 20# or more

Participant #7

Axis I PTSD

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Anorexia Nervosa

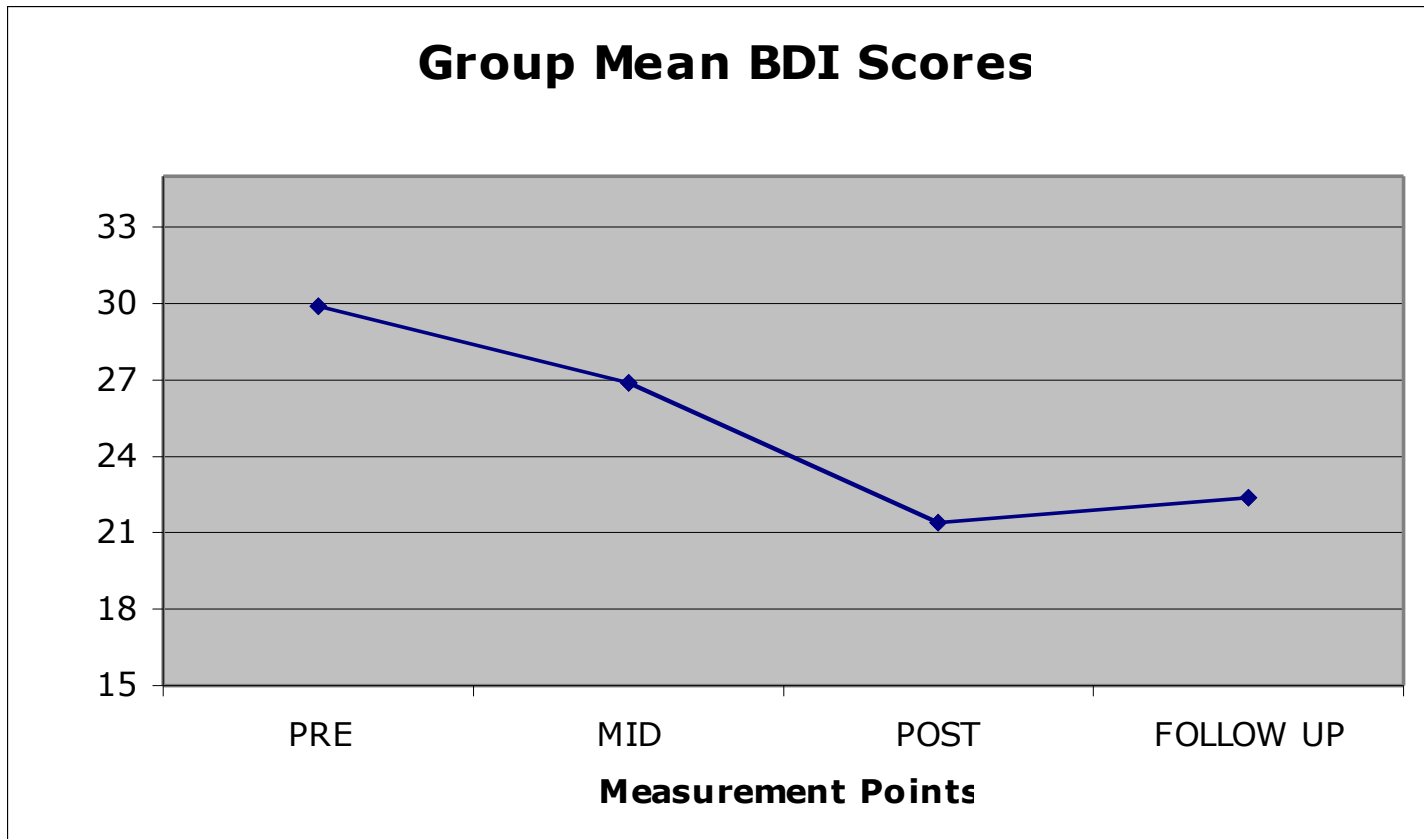
Axis II

Borderline Personality Disorder

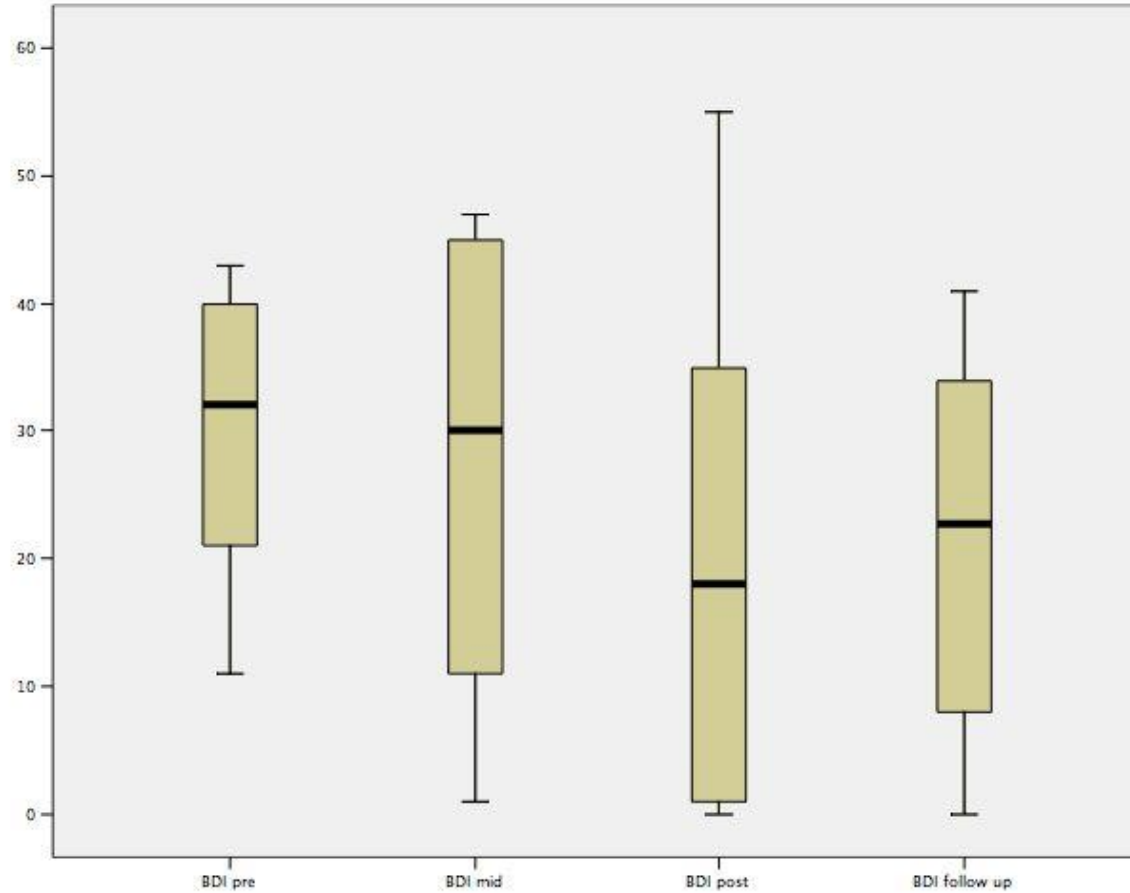
CSA- age 9-11 yrs/ CP&E abuse father/

Hears voices/Suicidal ideation/chemical
dependency/alcohol abuse

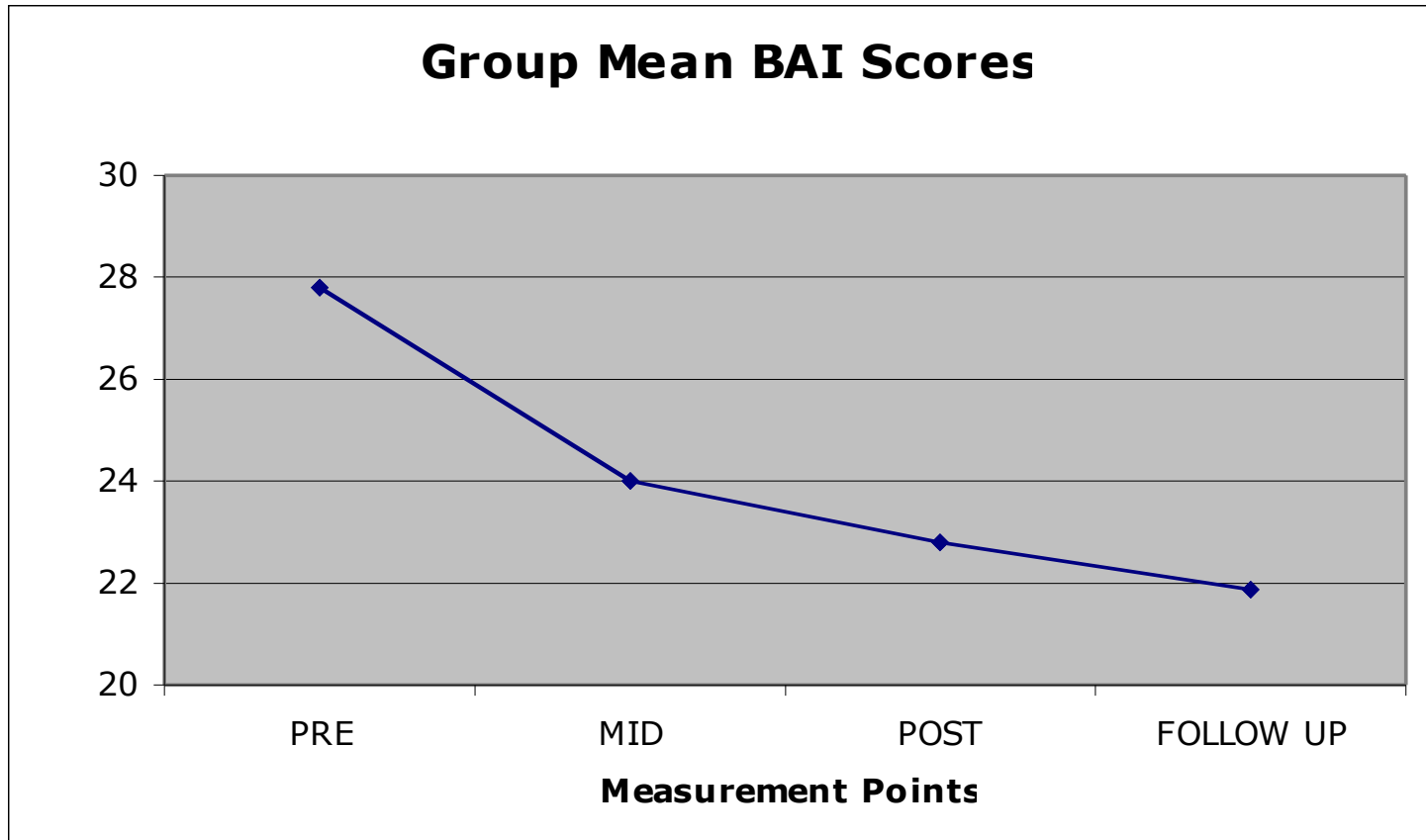
Results: Hypothesis 1



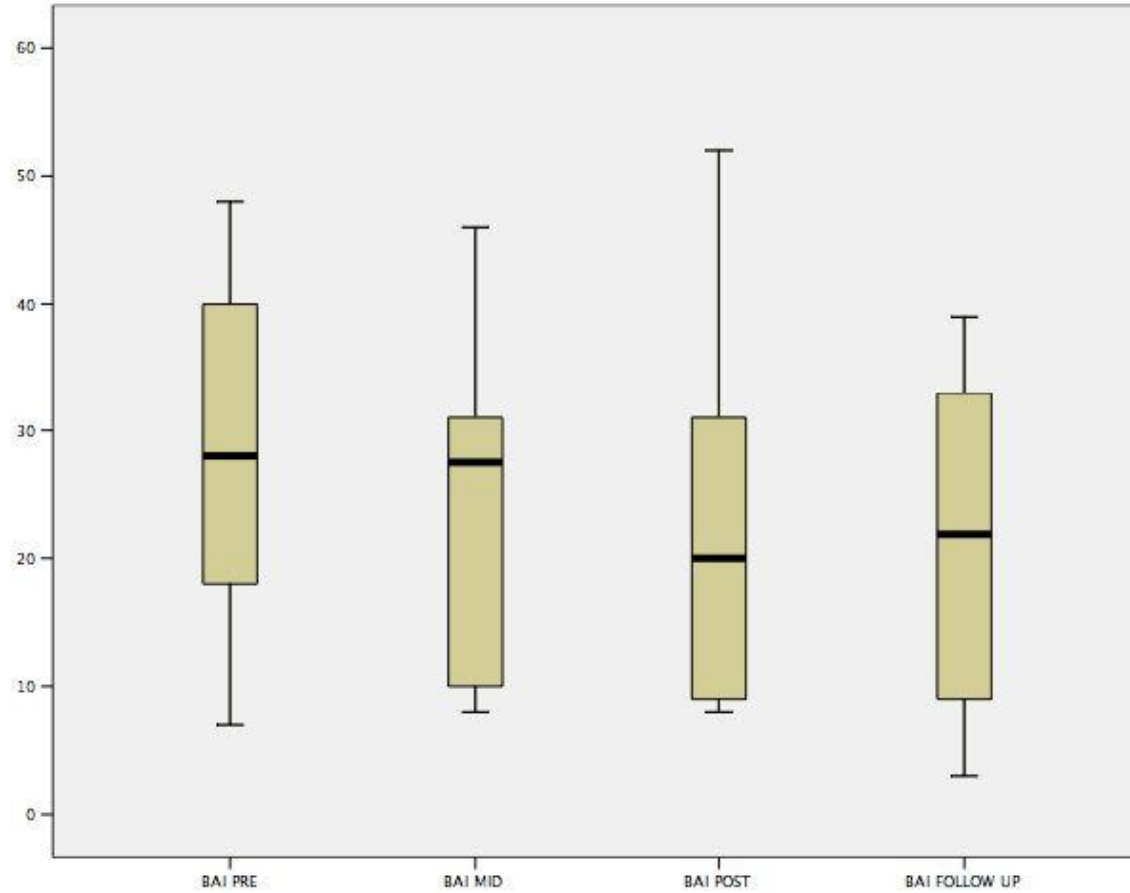
Hypothesis 1



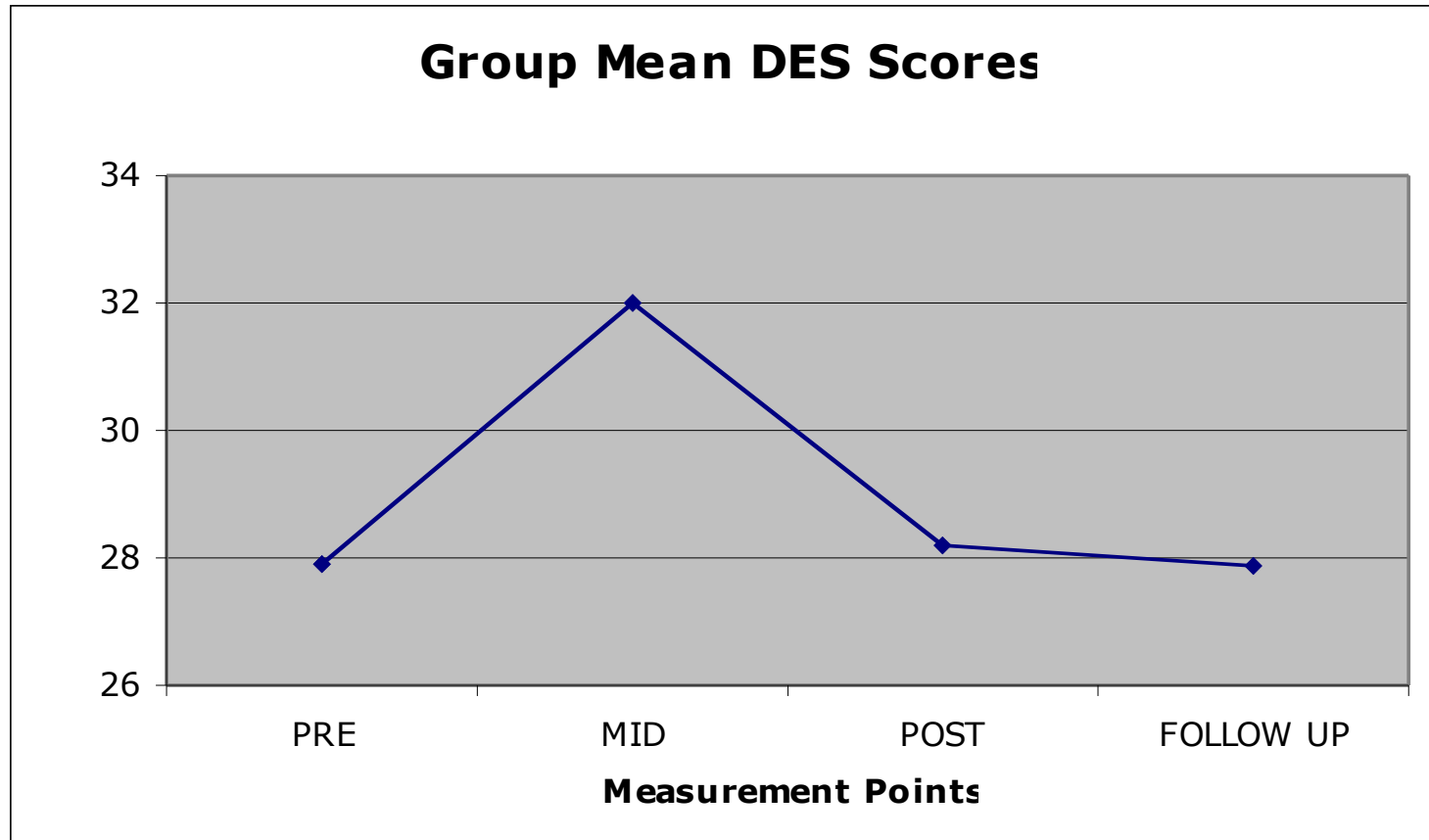
Results: Hypothesis 2



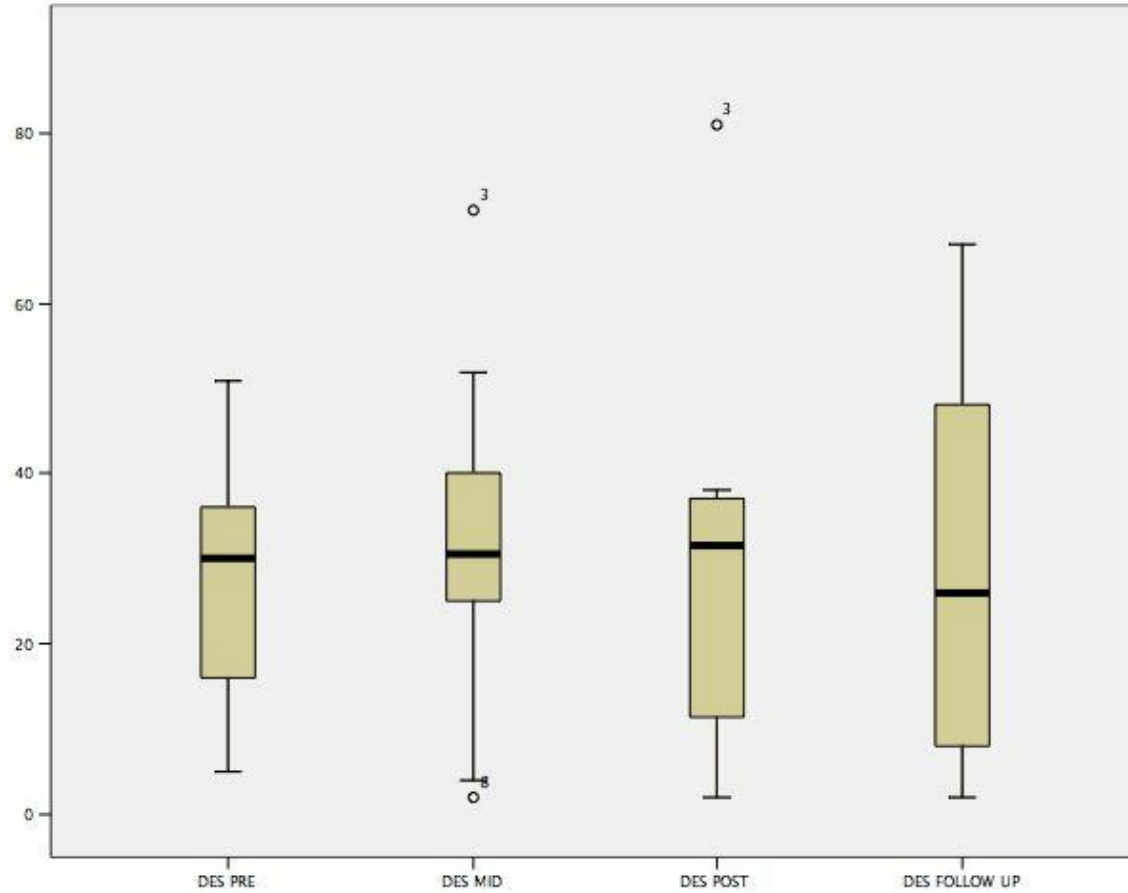
Hypothesis 2



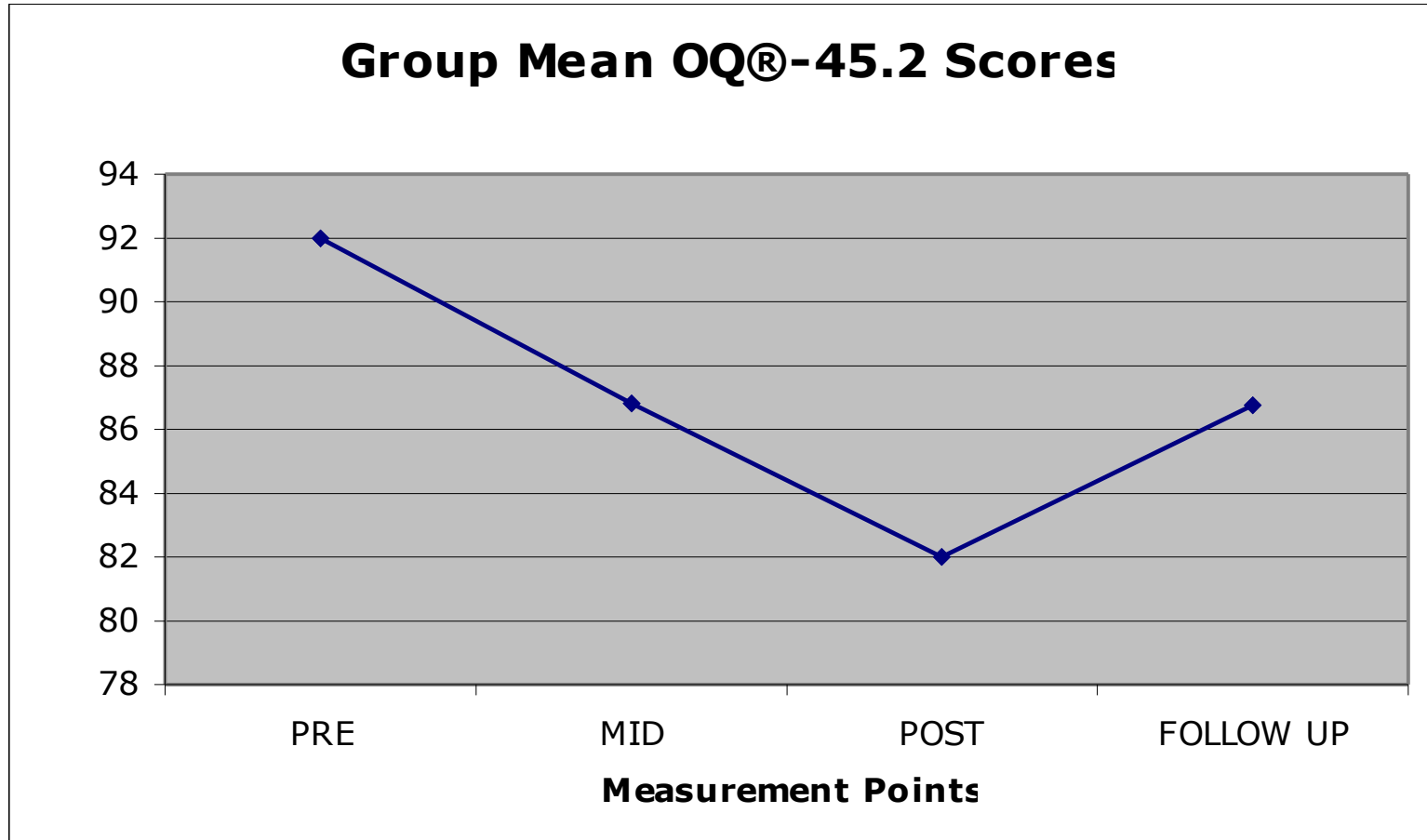
Results: Hypothesis 3



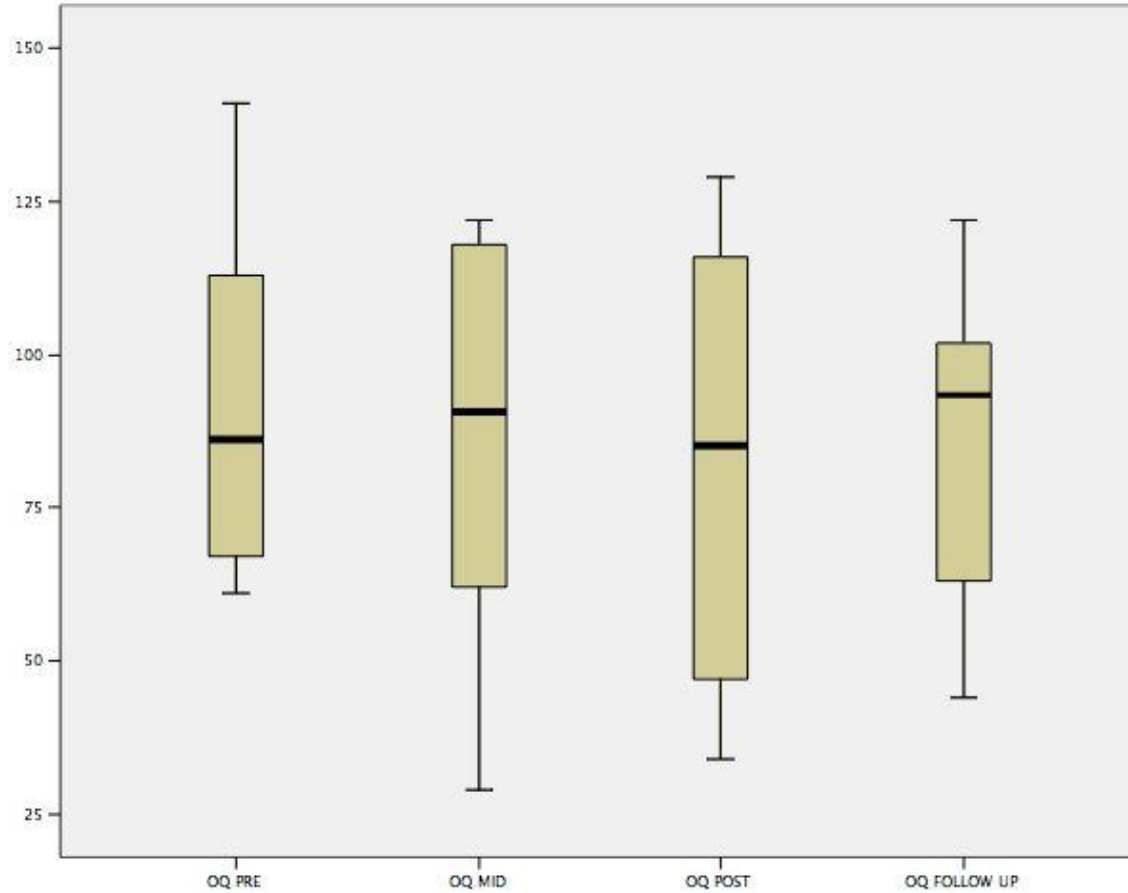
Hypothesis 3



Results: Hypothesis 4



Hypothesis 4



Results: Hypothesis 5



Participants will report positively about their relationship to the horse(s), and consider them an important element in their healing as evidenced by their responses to the post treatment survey administered at the end of session ten.

End Session Ten Data

Question

Themes

Describe your relationship to the horse(s)
that you interacted with in the program.

Connection, bonding

Boundaries

Respectful

Trust

Joy

How did it feel to work with the horse(s)?

Positive, enjoyable, good, relaxed,

Calming, beneficial, happy

Scared, working through fear

Empowering, confident, confidence

Exhilarating, exciting

How were the horses important in your
healing? Or not?

Trust, love (unconditional)

Self confidence, not be scared

Very important

Self reflection

Mirror

Results: Hypothesis 6



Participants will report that EFP treatment positively impacted their lives and are using specific skills they learned as part of the treatment as evidenced by the responses to the follow-up survey administered at four months post treatment.

Follow up Data

Questions

Themes

Did your experience with this type of therapy impact your life? Is so, how?

Self-acceptance & confidence

Boundaries

Trust

Do you use what you learned from participating in the therapy? If so, what?

Self-acceptance, awareness, confidence

Boundaries

Grounded & calm (body)

What is the most significant thing that you have taken away from your participation in this therapy?

Love (unconditional), Friendship,

Bonding

Confidence, Assertiveness, Boundaries

Awareness & Listening to Self &

Body

Balance & Calm

Results Summary

- Hypothesis 1: Significant reduction in depression - clinically moderate
- Hypothesis 2: Reduced anxiety
- Hypothesis 3: Dissociation
- Hypothesis 4: OQ - clinically improved
- Hypothesis 5: Confirmed
- Hypothesis 6: Confirmed



Discussion

- Reductions in depression & anxiety, improvements in self esteem & overall functioning
- Consistent with the pilot study - reduction in depression, & overall functioning
- Participants view EFP as overwhelmingly positive:
 - *It was a great experience for me*
 - *It was one of the best summers of my life*
 - *I have never experienced such bonding that feels so real. Where I could be me for me.. A step in the healing process that was long overdue.*

Discussion

- Intractable depression a feature of trauma (Herman)
: consistent with EFP outcome study results
- Meinersmann, Bradberry, & Roberts (2008)
interviewed women survivors of abuse about their
experience of EFP and identified four patterns that
reflect the findings of the qualitative portion of this
outcome study

Discussion

Patterns	Outcome Themes
I Can Have Power	Empowerment, confidence, boundaries
Doing It Hands On	Confidence, somatic awareness, self-awareness
Horse as Co-Therapist	Trust, love, bonding, mirror, self-esteem
Turned My Life Around	Confidence, self-efficacy, feeling better

Discussion

- Therapeutic Relationship
 - Themes from qualitative data regarding relationship between client & horse mirror the relationship between client and human therapist
 - Attachment theory, intersubjectivity, & interpersonal neurobiology apply to the client/horse relationship
 - York, Adams, and Coady (2008) examined the therapeutic value of equine-human bonding in recovery from trauma and found that the relationship, “suggests parallels between good equine-human relationships and good therapist-client relationships, both, in terms of the bonds that are formed and their healing qualities.” (p. 25)

Discussion: Significance

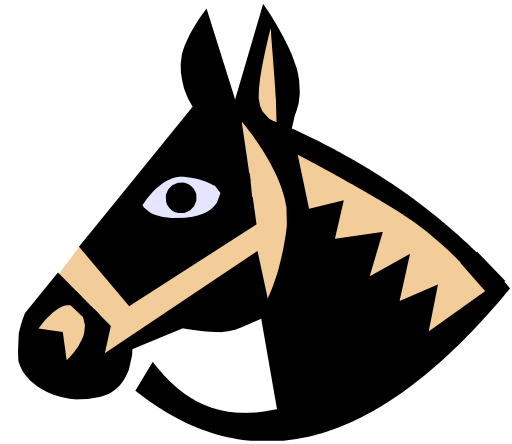
- Adds to the literature supporting EFP as an effective modality
- Supports previous research & shows EFP can be beneficial for adults with PTSD & co-occurring disorders including: BPD, MDD, OCD, Substance Abuse & Dependence, & Eating Disorders

Further Research

- Studies with larger samples
- Use a waitlist - control group
- Extend EFP to other populations
- Further quantitative studies to isolate true constructs effected by EFP
- Include measure of traumatic beliefs (trauma & attachment belief scale)

Limitations

- Difficult to generalize to other populations
 - Only women participants
 - Small sample size
 - Specific type of EFP
 - ‘Expert’ facilitator
- No control group
- No way to exclude the effects of other therapies/treatments group members may have experienced at the time



Conclusion

- EFP has great potential for treatment of adults suffering from the effects of trauma & Axis I & II disorders
- Qualitative data highlights unique qualities the horse brings to therapy
- Allow formation of therapeutic relationship with participants that have difficulties forming healthy relationships
- Horse promotes somatic & nonverbal awareness while the human therapist facilitates the co-construction of narrative

